



Website directory for Montana artists

State of the Arts is compiling a list of Montana-based websites that promote Montana artists and performers. The list includes:

• **www.findartmontana.com:** the site is designed specifically to help visitors locate artists, studios and art as they travel in the state and enjoy the local culture. To participate, fill out the Artist Information Form located on the About Us page..

• **www.montanamusicians.com** and **www.montanabands.com:** Find musicians, collaborate and stay connected with other Montana musicians. Browse by location and price range.

• **www.theartcenterhelena.com:** The Art Center in Helena is a group of artists dedicated to creating and promoting art. Membership (\$35 annually) includes opportunities to exhibit, take classes and workshops and participate in paint-outs and social events.

For inclusion in the directory, send your web address, a brief description of the service you provide, and information on how artists or performers can sign up to kristi@livelytimes.com. Please put "Website listing for State of the Arts" in the subject line.

THE ARTIST'S TOOLBOX

Writing an artist statement that connects to readers

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(Abridged from *Artrepreneurship: Sustaining the Creative Life*)

MAC's Montana Artrepreneur Program offers a process for "Market Ready Certification" as a central focus to help artists prepare to sell their work. To become certified, artists must understand the basic concepts in a sustainable business and gather all the tools in the *Artrepreneur's Toolbox* ©. Creating an artist's statement is one of more than 30 tools in that toolbox that artists complete to produce a professional portfolio.

The task

Investing some time and creativity in a solid artist statement can yield tremendous rewards for you. This piece of writing reflects both you and your work. Written poorly, it distracts from your art. Written well, it becomes an investment that will continue to pay you dividends.

Your artist statement helps build broader awareness about you and add value to your own artwork. Consider including information about:

- You, the artist. Help the viewer build a stronger picture of who you are.
- Your process of creating. Explain how the time spent in creating your work adds value.
- Your art and the big picture. Help the viewer gain a deeper understanding of your work.

Broad suggestions

Consider applying the rule in journalism for writing the beginning paragraph of a newspaper story. A lead paragraph always needs to have a brief answer to the "Five W's" of who, what, when, why, and where. Sometimes they throw in the how.

A strong artist's statement clearly explains:

- Who are you as an artist?
- What kind of art do you make?
- Why do you make your art?
- Where do you make your art?
- When do you make your art?

Readers have short attention spans, which give you a very short span of time (perhaps a sentence or two) to grab their attention and get your point across. Make your first sentence the most compelling, a grabber.

Keys to creating a memorable statement

- Insure that your artist's statement is:
 - Concise.
 - Easily and quickly read.
 - Informative.
 - Possibly entertaining, but not overly clever.
 - Clearly organized so that your viewer doesn't get lost.
- Remember that you are telling a story – the

story of your art. Insure that the first sentence of your statement grabs the reader.

Use NO "artspeak." Make your artist's statement understandable for everyone.

Keep verbs in the active, not passive, voice. Use action verbs that show confidence and strength of purpose.

Avoid phrases like "I'm trying to..." or "I want to..." These constructions hint that you are waffling. Write about what you do.

Avoid overusing "I" or "me". Too many of those words can make it sound like the art world revolves around you.

Keep your sentences short. People don't read long chunks of text.

Don't rely on the jargon used in your particular medium. Although the reader will want specifics, too much minutiae will lose them.

Avoid becoming too "mystical" in what you write. Everything that you write needs to be directly and clearly grounded in your art.

Avoid flowery phrases, clichés and generalities. This type of writing really says nothing, except to tell the reader how to feel or perceive. Describe, don't tell.

Avoid grammar and spelling errors. Writing involves building trust, and one of the best ways to build trust is to avoid common errors.

Be aware of current trends while writing. Tie your statement and art to ideas currently in the public consciousness.

Emphasize that your work is one-of-a-kind. The more special your work seems can be the trigger for someone to invest in your art.

Steps to writing an artist's statement

As you write, keep in mind that it is far better to end up with too much information and then trim it, than to not have enough information and have to go back and add pieces. Keep all your notes and versions for future revisions.

Step 1: Brainstorm. Think about your audience and who will read this statement. Picture the person sitting across from you. Use words and phrases to express your feelings about your work.

Ask a friend or group of trusted friends to help you brainstorm phrases. Don't edit or analyze what they say; just quickly note their ideas.

Step 2: Create a draft. Now start weaving your ideas together to create a cohesive whole. At this stage you are going to write a three-to-four paragraph draft statement. As you write, remember to:

- Write in first person ("I, me");
- Use the active voice ("I bought the candy," not "The candy was bought by me.");
- Use the present tense ("I draw," not "I drew.");
- Be real and grounded.

- Be confident.

For each of the paragraphs below, write three to five sentences:

Paragraph one. This introduction tells who you are and why you do what you do. It could be considered a warm up. Remember the five W's.

Paragraph two. Discuss your materials, tools and how your creative process works.

Paragraph three: Weave in the brand of your landscapes, physical and cultural, as the frame on which you build.

Paragraph four: What are you exploring by creating what you do now?

Step 3: Let it rest. Once you have written a draft, do not reread right away. Wait for a week before you reread it, and don't let anyone else read it. Just let it rest and ripen.

Step 4: Edit. After a ripening period, your statement is ready for you to edit. Editing means more than simply correcting grammar or spelling errors. You may need to turn your statement inside out. Rewrite.

Step 5: Get a second opinion. What seems perfectly clear to you may puzzle others. Ask someone you trust to read the statement and provide comments. Ask specifically: Do they understand what you are trying to say?

How does the piece make them feel and is it congruent with your art?

Did they find technical errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation?

Rewrite.

Step 6. Use Your Statement. Date the original and make copies. Use it, knowing that each time you put your statement out to the public, you extend your network and build relationships.

Prepare three kinds of statements and have them ready:

- A one-sentence statement that's 25-30 words long.
- A one-to-two-paragraph statement for a show or portfolio. Each paragraph may have from 50-100 words in it.
- A multiple paragraph piece that's 300-500 words and could be included as part of a catalogue.

Don't think it is ever done

Your artist's statement is a living document. It evolves with your art, changes as you change, shifts as the circumstances in which it is used shift. What you write today is not carved in stone.

A final thought. Writing a strong artist statement is a creative process and there is no magic formula to follow. Just as you would never expect to follow a format or kit for the art you create, so your artist statement rises from inside you.

SIG awards for January-May 2014

Organization/Individual	Project Title	Town	Awarded
Patricia Thornton	Daydreams and Dalliances	Missoula	\$165
Margie Judd	"Mary Quite Contrary" Documentary Film	Butte	\$1,000
Emily Nell Yellowbird	Society of Children's Book Authors & Illustrators Conference	Wilsall	\$1,000
Gordon Alcorn	Purchase of Engraving Tool	Bozeman	\$1,000
Jeri Rafter	Bella Vista	Missoula	\$1,000
Vicki Fish	Creativity Workshop	Bozeman	\$1,000
Jessie Grossman	Creative Writing Workshop Anthology	Eureka	\$30
Erin Hawley	Training & Network Development	Whitefish	\$1,000
Zootown Arts Community Center	The Last Best Printfest 2014	Missoula	\$750
Stellarondo	Associated Writers Conference	Missoula	\$1,000
Dave Caserio	AWP Conference Presentation 2014	Billings	\$362
Carol Hartman	Rocky Mountain	Bozeman	\$1,000
Mineral County Performing Arts Council	Mineral County Centennial Celebration	Superior	\$1,000
Heather Higinbotham	Haven Writing Retreat	Bozeman	\$1,000
Marti Kurth	Middle Eastern Music & Dance Camp	Whitefish	\$ 912
Bat Honey Puppeteers	Pop, Fizzle, Boom Puppet Tour	Missoula	\$1,000
Flathead Valley Concerts Association	Rob Verdi Public Performance	Kalispell	\$1,000
Dione Roberts	Kiln Upgrade for Art Glass Production & Teaching	Billings	\$1,000